

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 094

CS 505 535

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TITLE Coaching Strategies in Contest Persuasive Speaking: A Guide to Coaching the Novice.
PUB DATE 8 Nov 85
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (71st, Denver, CO, November 7-10, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Debate; Higher Education; *Oral Interpretation; *Persuasive Discourse; *Public Speaking; Rhetorical Instruction; Secondary Education; *Speeches; *Speech Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Coaching; Debate Tournaments

ABSTRACT

Forensic coaches can follow certain strategies to best instruct new recruits. The novice should be encouraged: (1) to check the particular rules for each tournament; (2) to stick with traditional oratory forms--innovation can come later; (3) to watch "60 Minutes" or the evening news--excellent sources of timely topics; (4) to avoid emotionally laden topics such as abortion or school prayer; (5) to research thoroughly each topic; (6) to use an outline--it allows the student and coach to check the logic of the speech throughout the preparation process; (7) to maintain a proper balance between logical and emotional proof; (8) to use evidence ethically (quote in context; give credit to the author); (9) to print the outline on an index card and use it instead of notes when delivering the speech; and (10) to practice extensively. Recently, a number of complaints have been raised about how persuasion and oratory are being practiced around the country. Coaches and judges can do a great deal to encourage positive change in competitive events by making sure they explore the best and most effective ways for novices to learn the ins and outs of persuasion. (Sample outlines are included, and a sample persuasive speech is appended.) (AEW)

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**Coaching Strategies in Contest Persuasive Speaking:
A Guide to Coaching the Novice**

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**Presented at
The Speech Communication Association
National Convention**

Denver, Colorado

November 8, 1985

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The aim of true rhetoric . . . is nothing other than improvement and education; the only proper use of persuasion is to make us better.¹

What is "persuasion"? Many tomes have been written and arguments offered as to the many ways we humans affect and influence one another. According to Herbert Simons, persuasion is "human communication designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes."² Mary John Smith puts it very simply: persuasion is "people influencing other people."³ Persuasion occurs in many forms and situations, but we as forensic coaches are faced with the peculiar animal known as "contest persuasion" or "oratory". And if that were not enough, we are forced to teach this permutation of the art of human speech to unknowing and unsuspecting creatures called "novices". This presents us with an unending dilemma--just how do we attempt to synthesize all that has been written and all that we have been taught concerning persuasion into a form easily understood by the uninitiated? The authors hope to shed some light on this process by first exploring the types of persuasion that are currently being practiced around the country at forensic tournaments and then offering what we feel to be the best methods of helping the newcomer conquer this labyrinth.

The ability to influence others is not one to be taken lightly. History has shown us what can happen when this skill is used for both good and evil. We are hardly suggesting that one student's speech on the snail darter can cause the fall of civilization, but we do feel that persuasion is a serious occupation, perhaps the most important of all the forensic

events. We do think that changing a judge's or contestant's attitude or actions considering a given subject is an important issue, and one that should not be taken lightly. After all, the power to persuade is what sets us apart from other species, and we can use that power wisely and in significant ways, even in the contest setting.

Unfortunately, we are hampered somewhat by the way "persuasion" is defined by current tournament rules. It is important to note that even though many contests use AFA or NFA rules, not all do. It becomes especially important for the novice and his/her coach to check the particular rules for each tournament to make sure the speech in question follows all the guidelines. There are few things more discouraging than to have the novice receive poor marks simply for not following the rules for that tournament.

The definitions offered at the beginning of this discussion would lead one to believe that any endeavor to change beliefs or attitudes of the audience could be persuasion. In practice, this is simply not so. Even though recent attempts to change the parameters of oratory have been somewhat successful, the accepted forms of a contest persuasive speech are few. We feel that the novice would do well to stay close to these forms at the beginning, and then branch out to attempt a speech that may be more daring when s/he feels more comfortable with the event.

The AFA defines Persuasive Speaking as follows:

The speech must be the original work of the student and should be persuasive or inspirational in nature. The speech should be memorized and not more than 10% of the material should be direct quotations.

Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.⁴

The NFA sets the rules for Persuasion thusly:

An original problem-solution speech on a significant issue delivered from memory. Limited notes are permitted. Qualifies from persuasion, oratory, peace oratory, original oratory, public address, etc.; event must have required an original speech the purpose of which was the speaker's persuasion of his audience.⁴

While the AFA allows speakers to be "inspirational", the NFA still prefers problem-solution type oratories. We shall not argue the merits of these positions, but just comment that it seems to be better for a novice to start with the narrow confines of a few accepted forms, and then feel free to expand the limits of the event. Even though the NFA definition here does not limit time, 10 minutes is the maximum for an NFA persuasion. This may seem like an eternity to a novice, but we have found few topic areas that want to be squeezed into this time structure. Most tournaments stick to the 10 minute limit, but not all do. This is the reason it is so important to double check on individual rules for tournaments, so as not to punish the student unnecessarily for a mistake that can easily be avoided.

The novice may not exactly understand what his/her coach means as yet by "persuasion" or "oratory", but it is time for her or him to attempt to find a topic for his/her speech. It is enough for the student to know that s/he is looking for an area that is important and significant to him/her and that will allow for research to be used later as evidence in support of the position the speech will take. Now, the comments start: "But I don't have any ideas for a speech. Nothing I can think

of is important." The easiest place to start is with the student. If s/he really thinks about it, there are topics about which the student feels strongly. Some of these will undoubtedly have been "done to death" as persuasive topics, but there are bound to be one or two that are worth exploring. It is important for the coach to be able to steer the novice away from those subjects that are overdone. It doesn't take long for even a new coach to hear many of the same speeches over and over again at tournaments. That is not to say that some overworked topics are not worth another shot, but the coach has the responsibility to see that new information or a new solution is offered to the problem before allowing the novice to proceed further. Judges, especially, are tired of hearing stale topics, and some are known to be very cruel in letting the contestant know just that. And who needs that grief?

If the novice really is having trouble with finding a workable topic, there are directions to be pointed to. By keeping her/his eyes and ears open, any student should be able to come up with a handful of topics in a single day. Encourage him/her to watch the news on TV, or to catch some editions of the "newsmagazines" like "60 Minutes" or "20/20". Even the smallest local TV station does investigative reporting, which can often lead to a topic of national concern. National magazines like Mother Jones and the Village Voice are also excellent sources for topics. What is important is that the novice finds a subject that s/he will feel committed to. We have found that the closer the student feels to the topic, the

harder s/he will work on the speech. That is certainly not to say that some objective space is not important, too, but this can often be supplied by the coach. Real commitment will often compensate for some deficiency in delivery, if the judge can sense true feelings coming from the speaker, rather than the "programmed" delivery we so often see. On the other hand, we have all been subject to the novice speaker who is overly committed to the subject at the expense of good logical proof. A connection between speaker and speech goes a long way, however.

Another point to keep in mind when selecting the topic is the possibility of the reality of the expected outcome. It's sometimes easy to find a broad topic, but then almost impossible to find a solution to the problem. Also, the novice should be aware of the already existing beliefs in his/her audience. Some moral questions, especially, are very difficult to work into a good speech simply because people's minds are closed to any options. Abortion and school prayer seem to be so overly emotionally laden that any attempt to be rational about these subjects is doomed to failure. So, practicality and commitment go hand-in-hand to assure a good topic selection.

If the student has chosen a topic that both s/he and his/her coach feel is important and workable, it's time to do some research on the subject. Your team's extemp file is a good place to start (if you're lucky enough to have a good one), since it will have the most recent information and good sources for further research. The student should be keeping in mind

several areas for support material. How extensive is the problem? How important is what I'm trying to do? What experts can I find to give me sample cases and anecdotes to illustrate my position? What statistics can I find? It is not always important to have decided exactly what position the speech will take while doing research. In fact, it's often a good idea to research both sides of the question in order to be able to answer any questions or charges that come up on later ballots. This also gives the student a broader base from which to draw when actually writing the speech.

Once most of the research has been completed, it is time to start thinking of what form the speech will take. You will find two of the most common models for contest speaking, the need/satisfaction (motivated sequence) outline and the problem/cause/solution outline in Tables 1 and 2. We have found these models to be the most effective for the beginning student. It depends a lot on the subject as to which avenue to pursue. We have found it most helpful for the student to view his/her speech as an argument in support of a specific perspective. With this focus in mind, the most important point we can make here (and in the entire treatise) is to insure that both the novice and the speech have a specific goal. How many persuasions have you heard that seem to have no point, or no specific solution? Ask your student, "What response do you want from your audience?" If you can't get a concrete answer, you may have to rethink the focus of the speech. There should be one specific goal to the entire speech, whether it be writing your

Congressman, filling out a form letter to mail, or a change in an attitude. This last is sometimes difficult to achieve, but the attitude must be as specific as possible for the speech to succeed. The specificity of the goal to be accomplished can not be emphasized enough. The more precise the wording of the anticipated response, the better the chance the speech has of achieving that response.

It's often a good idea to start with a thesis statement, which clearly outlines the goal of the speech. You can sometimes cut down on later problems of length and breadth by examining the thesis. It's important for the novice to keep the limitations of the situation, already discussed, in mind. You only have 10 minutes. You don't have a universal audience; rather, you'll be talking to college professors (and an occasional bus driver) and college students for the most part. What do they want to hear about? Can my subject be adequately covered and supported by existing research? A concise thesis statement should answer these questions, or give little danger signals as to potential problems.

We have found that outlines work very well for beginning students, even though they can add an extra step to the speech writing process. The primary advantage of an outline is that it keeps the student's argument/perspective before him/her at all times. It serves as a visual representation which allows the student and coach to check the logic of the speech throughout the preparation process. One of the most common problems we have observed, particularly with novice persuasive speakers, is

the tendency to present and thoroughly develop a problem and then to propose a solution to an entirely different problem. For example, it is not uncommon to hear a heart-moving speech dealing with the problem of child abuse and the terrible effects it has on its victims. The speaker then tells us that the problem must be stopped, that child abuse must be eliminated. Finally, in the solution step, the student argues for mandatory prison sentences for all child abusers. The dilemma here is that the solution occurs after the fact and actually does nothing to stop/prevent the incidence of child abuse or the damaging affects it has on children. A clear, well-developed outline will alert both the coach and the student to this type of inconsistency early on.

Another advantage of the speech outline is that it allows the speaker to make certain that s/he has used a consistent organizational pattern throughout the speech. Often referred to as parallel structure, this technique involves solving all problems or shortcomings presented in the need/problem section of the speech in the same order as in the satisfaction /solution section. By organizing the problem and solution sections consistently, the audience is aware of the speaker's argument and its logical progression at all times. The outline will also force the student to focus his/her thoughts on specific parts of the speech instead of being overwhelmed by the entire project. Visualizing the speech by breaking it down into its component parts will make it easier to concentrate on those sections which need the most work. The outline may also prevent time wasted by

having the student prepare the entire speech only to find out s/he has too much material or the subject is too broad. Outlines can be a pain, but they can also be the perfect visual tool in helping the novice.

Allow us a small personal prejudice here. Both authors come from a forensics background involving more than one Individual Events coach. We have found that it can be confusing for young speakers to be exposed to a multitude of approaches and coaching styles at once. We suggest that the student find one principle coach for the developmental stages of his/her speech, and then offer the speech to other coaches for comments and refinement. We realize that not all programs have the luxury of many coaches, but we also realize the potential danger from being bombarded by too many opinions at one time.

By this point, the student should have a strong, significant topic, a concise thesis statement, and a workable outline. The writing of the speech is at hand. This should be a simple process, if the outline is clear enough. The novice should be able to lead the listener step by step to a logical conclusion. Notice the use of the word "logical". We feel very strongly that a persuasive speech should most of all be a logical argument. As Aristotle pointed out, "the art of Rhetoric truly considered,... consists of proofs [persuasions] alone--all else is but accessory".⁵ He further adds, "the man who is to judge should not have his judgment warped by speakers arousing him to anger, jealousy, or compassion."⁶ Without getting too technical, a good coach should be able to explain to

the novice the difference between the 3 kinds of artistic proofs defined by Aristotle and the importance of each in the persuasive process. "Logos" should stand out as the speech follows an inevitable pattern to a solid conclusion. What kind of evidence does the student give to support his/her position? Does it fit the pattern and give weight to the argument? One of the problems we see in the current practice of contest speaking is the over-dependence on "pathos", emotional proof. While it is very important to engage the listener's emotions in the speech, too much emotion can cloud the issue. Nothing can "turn off" a judge faster than a seemingly endless string of sad stories and abysmal anecdotes. Without logical proof to back up those stories, it can be very difficult to achieve the desired goal. A proper balance between logical proof and emotional proof can be the most powerful weapon.

The audience is also influenced by the character of the speaker, or what Aristotle called "ethos". Modern use has broadened the meaning of ethos, we believe, to include not only what we can discern of the speaker's character but how that speaker uses the evidence presented.

In terms of the speakers' character, dress, poise, and presentational style are all important. The biggest problem facing many novice speakers is stage fright. Stage fright is natural and, for most speakers, unavoidable. Relaxation techniques and practice also go a long way in alleviating tension for the untrained speaker.

Our major concern in this area is the issue of ethical use

of evidence in the persuasive speech. If, as many theorists have asserted, the purpose of rhetoric is to discover and advance truth, the use of evidence is critical in this endeavor. As Simons stated,

Other things being equal, it's more ethical to speak truthfully and sincerely rather than to traffic in deliberate falsehoods, distortions, or ambiguities; to encourage rational choice rather than to subvert reason; to appeal to the best motives in people rather than to their worst impulses.⁷

We feel that while Simons definition is a good beginning, it is not explicit enough. As forensics is, above all, an educational activity, the accurate use of evidence is not only desirable--it is imperative. As McBath noted in his summation of the Sedalia conference, "Thoroughness and care must be exercised in finding, recording and documenting evidence. Advocates should recognize their ultimate responsibility for all evidence they use".⁸

Toward this end, we argue that it is ultimately the student's responsibility to use evidence ethically. It is the coach's responsibility to make certain that the student understands the implications of this charge. In general, a piece of evidence must be quoted in context, and no key words or phrases may be omitted which change the intent or the meaning of the message. Evidence should be clearly credited to the author, and the date and source of the information should be included. Acknowledging the fact that it is impossible and undesirable for the coach to check every piece of evidence in a speech, steps should be taken long before a speech is written to teach the student about the ethical responsibility of giving a speech. Trust between a student and his/her coach is crucial to an

effective working relationship. If a coach takes the time to teach her/his student how to research and how to use evidence appropriately, then the question of unethical use of evidence should not arise.

Often a beginning student is under the misconception that evidence speaks for itself. It is also important that a coach teach a student how evidence fits into the argument the student is trying to make in the speech. In most cases, evidence must be explained in the context of the speech in order for it to have any impact on the perception of the audience. One common problem occurs with the use of statistics. Numbers are often meaningless unless they can be visualized. Use an analogy that makes the numbers meaningful to your audience.

Once the speech has been written and all the evidence and support material are used to both the student's and coach's satisfaction, the novice speaker is ready to learn how to deliver the speech. It's time to speak. There is some disagreement among coaches as to the advisability of having novices memorize their speeches right away. We believe that few things are more impressive for the beginning speaker than a polished, poised delivery. This can only be obtained with memorization. Often, this area is the hardest for the novice to master, but memory does pay off in the end. Of course, not all new speakers can learn to memorize easily, so it may be desirable to allow note cards to be used in competition for the first or second tournament until the student feels comfortable with what can be a stressful situation. Make sure that the

tournament in question allows the use of notes in its rules before sending a novice out with them. In any case, note cards should not be used as a crutch or a smoke screen. The sooner the student learns to speak naturally without cards, the sooner the student will feel at ease in the speaking situation.

As in any speaking situation, if the student needs to use notes, it is advisable for him/her to write a detailed outline on her/his cards rather than to attempt to write or type the whole speech on cards. There are a number of reasons for this. First, it is extremely difficult to find one's place on cards when one is looking at an entire script of the speech. As valuable time is being wasted, the student often becomes more flustered and the process becomes even more difficult. A consistently indented, clearly organized outline alleviates this problem. It also decreases the time spent "away from the audience", (the second major reason not to put the entire script on cards). If the student began the speech writing process with an outline, s/he will be familiar with the organization of his/her speech and glancing at an outline will (usually) quickly bring the student back to his/her place.

The greatest and most important factor in polishing delivery is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. This point cannot be emphasized strongly enough. Practice at any time, in any place will do more to bolster the self-confidence of a novice speaker than any other single factor. It is often very difficult for the student to practice in front the "The Coach", so the novice should be encouraged to practice whenever the opportunity

arises. Odd moments during the day or during the tournament offer many short times to go over main points or transitions. A good mnemonic device is to practice the speech right before falling asleep. This helps to place the speech in the subconscious mind, which can aid the conscious mind in recalling salient points later. Also, varying the place for practice will allow the novice to become accustomed to speaking in a variety of strange places. We all have that one story to tell about the round we heard or competed in that took place in the bathrooms of the mansion at Monmouth College in New Jersey or some other such place. These things do happen; we need to prepare our students for the unexpected.

We have already alerted you to the ogre of stage fright, but there are techniques that anyone can use to help conquer those annoying symptoms of nerves. Simple breathing exercises will often help calm the speaker while preparing him/her for the actual speech.

Through the years, we have found a number of exercises to be particularly useful. There is no alternative to sitting in a comfortable chair, closing ones eyes and breathing deeply. However, the student still has to get up and speak! For tension in the back of the neck and shoulders, shoulder rolls and head rolls are very useful. The key is for the student to gain conscious control over her/his muscles. Consequently, another excellent exercise for the neck and shoulders is to clasp your hands together (much as in the children's 'here's the church, here's the steeple' game). Next, place the hands (still

clasped) behind the head at the base of the neck. GENTLY press down with the hands and up with the head. If done properly, the student will feel tension all across the shoulder area. Once the student has felt (and caused) the pressure, s/he can control it. Now the student should release the pressure gently. This should relax the muscles. Also suggest that the student, when speaking, center his/her weight and keep it a bit forward. This will prevent the dreaded swaying but it will also help relax the knees so they don't become locked while the student is speaking. Tensing and relaxing arms and legs will also help get those muscles under the student's control. A drink of water (a small one) will help a bit with dry mouth.

Persuasion, in any form, is an important and valuable human event. Even within the confines of the forensics tournament, the novice speaker has the opportunity to influence his/her fellow contestants and judges concerning a topic s/he truly cares about. Having fully researched the topic and chosen good, solid evidence that supports her/his position, the new persuader can change how we look at the world and point out ways we can alter how we live. We have heard and read any number of complaints about how Persuasion and Oratory are being practiced around the country, and many of these complaints are legitimate. But that doesn't mean we should give up trying. As coaches and judges, we can do a great deal to encourage positive change in the event by making sure we explore the best and most effective ways for our new students to learn the ins and outs of persuasion. By making sure we ourselves are better informed, we

can pass that valuable information along to our students. Change is possible; we just have to be willing to put in the extra effort required to get the change accomplished.

FOOTNOTES

1W. C. Helmbold, trans., Plato's Gorgias (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1952), p. vii.

2Herbert W. Simons, Persuasion: Understanding, Practice, and Analysis (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976), p. 21.

3Mary John Smith, Persuasion and Human Action: A Review and Critique of Social Influence Theories (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), p. 4.

4The authors are indebted to David M. Green's article on Persuasive Speaking in the 1984-85 Handbook from the Northern California Forensics Association for the suggestions on topic selection and the AFA and NFA rules on Persuasion.

5Lane Cooper, trans., The Rhetoric of Aristotle (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932), p. 1.

6Ibid., p. 2.

7Simons, p. 39.

8James H. McBath, ed., Forensics as Communication (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1976), p. 33.

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TABLE 1

Need/Satisfaction
The Motivated Sequence
based on Monroe (1962)

I. Attention: Introduction - gain the attention of your audience - orient them toward the subject of your speech (your perspective) [possible techniques include: quotations, anecdotes, and rhetorical questions]

Preview: present your argument to your audience - let them know exactly what will be covered in your speech
- list your main points

II. Need: a shortcoming that must be repaired - something that must be done

State the need: precisely explain the nature of the need

Illustrate the need: use examples and statistics to
develop the need

Prove significance and impact of the need

[possible techniques include: quotations from experts, case studies, and statistics]

Note: Transitions summarizing the key points of the previous

area and leading into the next area keep your audience aware of your argument/perspective at all times.

III. Satisfaction: plan of action which will remedy the need - that will do what needs to be done

State the plan

Explain how the plan will work

Indicate the effectiveness of the plan

Additional options: Show how this plan is superior to other alternatives

Deal with any shortcomings of the plan

[possible techniques include: illustrative examples, statistics, quotations from experts, and case studies in which the plan has been successful in the past]

IV. Visualization: make the implications of your perspective clear to your audience

Positive method: What will happen if your plan is accepted? - solution to needs - advantages

Negative method: What will happen if your plan is not accepted? - perpetuation of need - disadvantages

Note: It is often a good strategy to combine both the positive and negative methods to give your audience the whole picture.

V. Action: indicate exactly what you want your audience to do -
what courses of action you want them to take

Summary/Conclusion: final statement

Note: It is a useful technique to link your conclusion back to
your introduction. This makes your speech seem whole.

TABLE 2

Problem/Cause/Solution

Organizational Format

I. Introduction: gain audience attention - orient your audience toward the subject of your speech (your perspective) [possible techniques include: quotations, rhetorical question, and anecdotes]

Preview: present your argument to your audience - let them know exactly what will be covered in your speech
- list your main points

II. Problem: a condition that must be remedied - something wrong that must be righted

State problem: What is the condition that must be remedied?

History of the problem

Prove the significance and magnitude of the problem

[possible techniques include: case studies, quotations from experts, statistical]

III. Cause: What conditions precipitate the problem?

Identification and description of causes

Link between problem and causes

Proof of causes

[possible techniques include: case studies, quotations from experts, statistics]

Note: Transitions summarizing what has been covered in each area and introducing what is to come in the next area keeps your audience aware of your argument and the links between the parts of your speech at all times.

IV. Solution: plan of action which will solve problem - note in the case of a problem/cause/solution speech, the causes must be removed or neutralized in order to solve the problem

State the plan

Explain how the plan will work

Indicate effectiveness of plan - use evidence to support it

Options: Show how plan is superior to other plans

Deal with any shortcomings of the plan

[possible techniques include: illustrative examples, statistics, quotations from experts, case studies in which the plan has worked in the past]

V. Summary/Conclusion: make your final argument to your audience - review key issues and implications

Note: It is a good idea to link your conclusion back to your introduction to create a whole.

APPENDIX A

THE BURNING QUESTION OF OUR NATION'S BOOKS

BY JAY W. BROWN

University of Minnesota, Minnesota

Coached by Christina Reynolds

INTRODUCTION

"Books are the legacies left to mankind, delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those yet unborn." Joseph Addison poetically hints at the relationship between a reader and a book. As we sit in front of the fire with Shakespeare or curl up in bed with a romance novel, reading becomes a tactile aesthetic relationship. But more than that, through the written word we have preserved all those things which are important to us: from the Old Testament to Einstein. We've made their relationship to ourselves concrete by means of the printed page. So when something violates this relationship, it means the loss of a part of ourselves. John Steinbeck argues that "A book is somehow sacred. A dictator can kill and maim people and only be hated. But when books are burned, the ultimate in tyranny has

happened."

PROBLEM

STATEMENT

The ultimate in tyranny is happening. Our books are burning as they sit on our library shelves. The Minneapolis Star and Tribune writes, "There are no flames. No smoke. But the paper is burning, nonetheless. It turns yellow, then brown. It becomes crisp and eventually crumbles to dust." The Library of Congress, the world's largest depository of books which is founded on the philosophy that every book is invaluable, recently reported that 40% of its collection is no longer usable. The New York Public Library estimates that one half of its five million books are on the brink of disintegration. And according to a study done in 1978 by the William Barrow Laboratories, 97% of all books published in the first half of the century will be unusable by 1990.

PREVIEW

OF MAIN

POINTS

The dramatic deterioration of our nation's library holdings is a crisis which affects all of us who depend on books for information, entertainment or aesthetic

pleasure. Let me first explain what causes this deterioration and then discuss why current methods for dealing with it are inadequate. Thirdly, I'll explore why we are ignoring our written legacy; and finally, suggest what we must do to protect it in the future.

The crisis of book deterioration is paradoxical. You see, volumes printed during the Middle Ages--from the Guttenberg Bibles on--are in better condition than books published 30 years ago. Why? Because older books were printed on better paper. Manufactured from linen and cotton rags mixed with animal and vegetable oils, such paper was not only strong, it had a higher alkaline content. But as the demand for paper increased in the late 19th century,

CAUSE paper manufacturers searched for cheaper and faster
STATEMENT ways to produce it, settling on the process which is
used today: wood pulp mixed with various chemicals.
These chemicals give the paper a high acid content.
And this acid is rapidly eating up our intellectual
heritage.

ALTERNATIVE

PLAN

Now, if you're like most people you've already said to yourself, "So we'll just computerize or microfilm

all these books and then it won't be a problem."

Though many libraries rely on these easy electronic methods, Publisher's Weekly pointed out last year that

LIMITATIONS

&

DISADVANTAGES

such "preservation techniques" are inadequate because they don't really preserve anything. Magnetic computer tapes are subject to easy erasure. And the National Archives reported in 1981 that 750,000 microfilmed documents have been damaged or destroyed because of deteriorating microfilm. And while the chemical

ALTERNATIVE

PLAN preservation techniques advocated by some libraries do add 100 to 200 years to the life of a book, Science News pointed out last year that chemical techniques

LIMITATIONS

are so time-consuming and expensive that they are impractical.

But regardless of their effectiveness, the fundamental inadequacy of these "perservation" methods

ALTERNATIVES

DON'T is that they are merely means of treating symptoms, not
SOLVE curing the disease. We clearly need to do what we can

PROBLEM to preserve what we have now, but more importantly, we need to get at the root of the problem and change the

SOLUTION way paper is manufactured. If that sounds impossible to you, it isn't. A manufacturing process developed 30

PLAN years ago produces highly alkaline paper equal in quality to acidic paper. There is a capital cost to convert the manufacturing equipment, but according to

ADVANTAGES

Chemistry magazine, the alkaline paper is actually cheaper to make than the acidic! And if estimates are correct, it will last about ten centuries longer.

If the solution is so simple, why are we still ignoring our written legacy? The underlying cause of

CAUSE the problem is our attitude. We can hardly expect paper manufacturers to care about the longevity of their product if we, the users, ignore it. And as a New England-based paper wholesaler explains, "I have no demands about the longevity of paper . . . it never comes up." The paper makers will only have motivation to switch to alkaline paper when we change our attitude. We are arrogant consumers. Unless something has sentimental or commercial value, when it's old, we throw it away. Of course, the classics will always be with us because consumers will continue

to buy them. Unfortunately, there are an awful lot of important books which don't retain that commercial value. The thing we tend to forget is that what is burning is not merely a sheaf of paper, but an idea. Ideas, like humans are ephemeral. But through books, both endure.

IMPLICATIONS

You may argue that not all books are worth saving. Perhaps not. But by continuing to print all books on acidic paper, we preclude the possibility of saving any of them. And it would be the height of arrogance for us to choose what future generations will read about us. If we only preserve books which we consider important, we enter the very dangerous realm of social

VISUALIZATION

censorship. Our society would be radically different if the societies which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls or Charles Darwin's notes had decided one of them wasn't worth saving.

If we and our ideas are to endure, we must see that our books--the physical manifestations of our ideas and our culture--are preserved. Not just for our own ego satisfaction, but because we owe it to our children. At present, we are committing our ideas to a

medium which we ourselves will outlive. We need to do something about the way paper is manufactured. Norman Shaffer, Director of the Library of Congress Preservation Office, says that pressure from the reading public does make a difference. Because of such pressure, a few small mills have switched from acidic to alkaline manufacturing. Shaffer believes that additional pressure from us will force the major mills to make the switch and he argues that the best way to apply that pressure is to write a letter--not to our Congressmen, but to our Congressional Librarian. The

APPEAL TO

AUDIENCE

TO ACT

Library of Congress has asked for indications of public concern about book deterioration. I have their address if any of you would like it now, or it can be found in any government directory. It is crucial to let the appropriate government agency know of your concern and, most importantly, to convince the paper industry to make the switch to alkaline paper.

PLAN OF

ACTION

But that's not all. We can do something our parents and teachers have been telling us for years, and which most of us--and most of them--have ignored: we can take care of the books we use. Even books printed on

acidic paper will last 50 or 60 years if handled properly. That means turn the pages with care, don't fold down corners to mark your place, and definitely don't write in them. The pressure from writing and the acid in ink and pencil simply accelerate the deterioration.

It's simple for you and me to care for the books we use and, by supporting the Library of Congress, it would be almost as simple for us to insure that all books are printed on alkaline paper. But because of our society's attitude that books are disposable, the paper industry continues to produce a product that will only last for 50 years, when it could easily last for a thousand. I think it's a tremendous irony that we spend billions of dollars yearly to build libraries to house our books, to catalogue them and store them; and then we print them on paper that won't last as long as we do. The problem is that not many of us think about the consequences of deterioration until a book falls apart in our hands.

SUMMARY/

CONCLUSION

One person described such an experience this way:
"The front part of the book I took from the shelf was

in my left hand, and back was in my right hand, and in between was this yellow snow drifting to the floor." That yellow snow is an idea that has been destroyed; not debunked, but destroyed. As Gilbert Highet asserts, "Books are not lumps of lifeless paper, but minds alive on the shelves . . . so by taking one down and opening it up, we call this range the voice of a (person) far distant from us in time and space, and hear (them) speaking to us. Mind to mind, heart to heart." Unless, of course, that voice falls fractured to the library floor in a flurry of yellow snow.